

CANADIAN  
Geographic

# Travel

## EXPLORING THE Great Bear

**RAINFOREST**

**A cruise through  
the B.C. hot spot**

(with Robert Bateman!)

FALL 2015  
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## TRAIL RIDING

Hitting the  
Rockies on  
horseback

## ISLAND HOPPING

A wildlife tour in  
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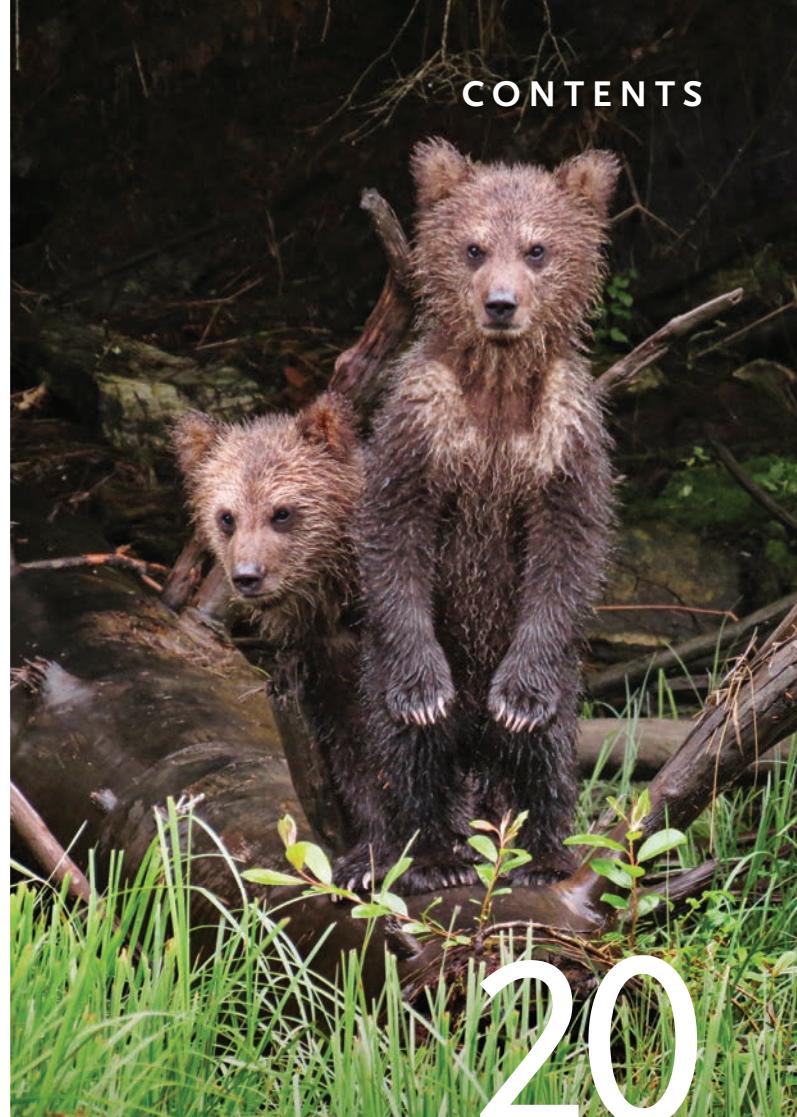
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On the cover: The *Maple Leaf* sails through Khutzeymateen Inlet in British Columbia's Great Bear Rainforest, by James Little.



## Travel traditions

**FALL STARTS IN KINMOUNT**, Ont. Or at least it does for me. Almost every Labour Day long weekend since I was a child, I've travelled to the community of about 500 in central Ontario to visit the Kinmount Fair.

One might describe it as a typical rural fall fair — there's a parade, agricultural exhibits, farm animal shows, truck, tractor and horse pulls, a stage show, a demolition derby and a midway — yet it's anything but average to me. My granny, Margaret Kylie, lived a short distance down the road from the fairgrounds for years and her children and grandchildren, their families and friends would gather each year to take in the festivities. (Granny's gone now, but most of us still meet at the fair annually.) And my father, who was born in nearby Furnace Falls, has attended the fair every year of his life (he won ribbons for showing cows at the event way, way back when). Today, I dress up in themed

costume with my own children (above) to participate in the parade.

So, the Kinmount Fair is personal, special because of how it's connected to my family and my heritage. (I may be biased, but I also believe it's a particularly vibrant example of the traditional, small-town fall fair.) I do my utmost not to miss it.

I suspect, and certainly hope, that many *Canadian Geographic Travel* readers have a similar tradition. That spring break trip to Florida. That Christmas getaway to Mexico. That annual summer vacation to the lake. And, if you're as fortunate as I am, I hope it has meant great family memories and a ritual you've been able to continue, if not pass on to another generation. If you don't have a travel tradition, it's time to start one. I recommend a trip to a fall fair a couple of hours from home. Or feel free to join me in Kinmount — to celebrate the start of autumn.

Aaron Kylie

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER John G. Geiger  
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EDITOR Aaron Kylie  
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NEW MEDIA MANAGER Paul Politis  
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### ADVERTISING SALES

VICE-PRESIDENT, ADVERTISING SALES Pamela MacKinnon  
Phone (416) 360-4151 ext. 378  
email: mackinnon@canadiangeographic.ca

SENIOR NATIONAL ACCOUNTS MANAGER Valerie Hall Daigle  
Phone (416) 360-4151 ext. 380  
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236 Lesmill Road, North York, ON M3B 2T5  
Phone (416) 360-4151; fax (416) 360-1526

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Hours: Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-8 p.m. (EST); Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. (EST)

### Editorial Office

1155 Lola Street, Suite 200, Ottawa, ON K1K 4C1  
Phone (613) 745-4629; fax (613) 744-0947  
Website: canadiangeographic.ca

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1155 Lola Street, Suite 200, Ottawa, ON K1K 4C1

Phone: (613) 745-4629

Email: [rcgs@rcgs.org](mailto:rcgs@rcgs.org)

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September 2015



ONLINE

### A weekend in ... Iqaluit?

It may not be the first city that comes to mind when planning a weekend trip, but Nunavut's capital offers plenty for visitors looking to get a quick taste of the North. [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ikaluit](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ikaluit)

### Culinary Canada

What are the quintessential recipes that represent each province and territory? Find out from some of the country's top chefs. [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/recipe](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/recipe)

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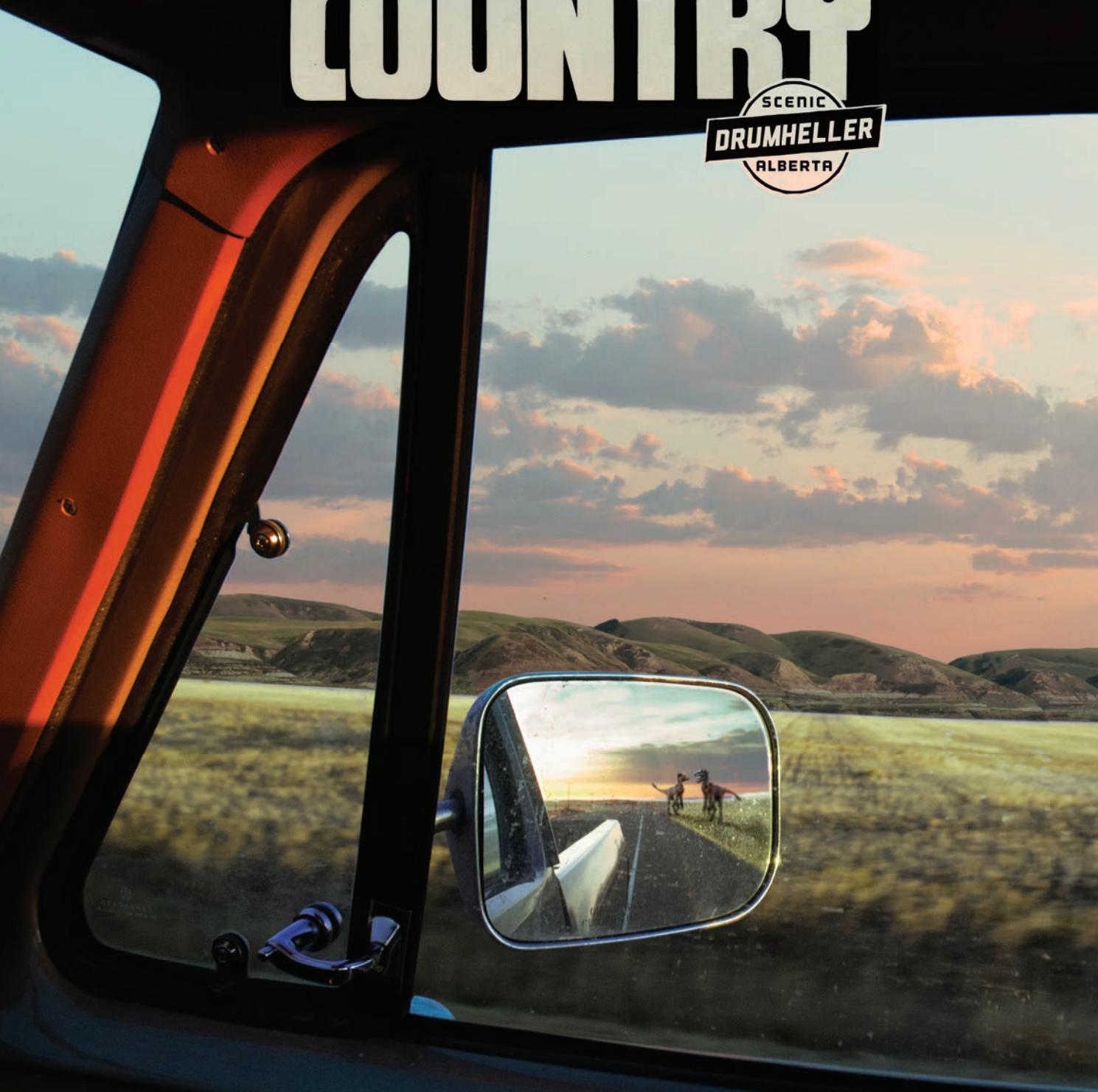
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PUBLIC SPACE

## Reinventing the library

BY NAOMI BUCK



ONCE A PLACE to borrow and return books, and ruled by prohibitions — No talking! No eating! No loitering! — the public library has re-created itself as a lively hub and has become an architectural and cultural point of pride for many communities across Canada.

There's no better place to experience the library's resurgence than the glass chamber on the fifth floor of Halifax's new central library. Cantilevering out over Spring Garden Road, it offers views of the boutique-lined boulevard beneath, Halifax Harbour below and the historic fortifications of Citadel Hill above.

"This has become Halifax's living room," says Åsa Kachan, chief librarian of Halifax Public Libraries. "I watch people stand at the window for a long time, looking over their city, seeing all the possibilities."

Three years of public consultations were held during the conception of the building, which opened in December 2014, and the public's input — including the request that the fifth floor not be reserved for administrative offices, as planned — was taken seriously.

The eye-catching Halifax Central Library (ABOVE) and Edmonton's Jasper Place branch (BELOW) have both become community hubs.

"Libraries are for the people," says Kachan. She loves walking through the library's bright and airy space, watching the range of activities from seniors playing bridge to kids building Lego. The library offers music studios, performance spaces and boardrooms for rent, and two cafés.

In a digital age, physical books are no longer the thing. Gone are the looming stacks and warehouse feel; today's libraries are open and inviting, their furniture durable and mobile, the space designed for communication and interaction. Because this is what libraries are now about: coming together.

So it's fitting that they occupy empty churches, as is the case throughout Quebec. In the charming town of Magog in the Eastern Townships, the Sainte-Marguerite-Marie Catholic Church had stood empty for years when the municipality decided to make it the new home of the Memphremagog region's cramped library.



## Travel Friendly

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## GATEWAY



A presentation space at the Memphremagog Library (TOP), which is a spacious former church (ABOVE RIGHT), and the makerspace at Edmonton's Stanley A. Milner branch (ABOVE LEFT) both attract community involvement.

For a population of 27,000, a \$10-million renovation is a big deal, but the community has embraced the library since it opened in 2011. On the outside, it still looks like the original church, built in 1949 and 1950 in art deco style. But the interior is flooded with natural light passing through stained glass windows of geometrical and "marguerite" (daisy) motifs. It has an auditorium seating 125 and — symbolically, perhaps — issues the town's "citizenship cards" with which Magog residents receive discounts from local businesses. "We are so proud of our library," says Mayor Vicki May Hamm. "The excitement around it still hasn't died down."

Canada's public libraries reflect civic

life at its best. They're also exceptional. Last year, Edmonton's public library won Library of the Year from the prestigious American *Library Journal* — the first Canadian library to win in the award's 23-year history. In the last two years, five new branches have opened in Edmonton, some pairing with recreation centres to create multi-use facilities where people can spend an entire day. "Libraries are thriving," says Tina Thomas, director of marketing for the Edmonton Public Library. "They've become — after home and work — the third space."



Indulge your love of libraries by checking out photos of the 10 most stunning in the country at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/library](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/library).



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## DESTINATIONS

# On our radar

**FROM AN ALL-SEASON** Ontario resort and remote islands on the West Coast to hiking in New Brunswick and tippling in Texas, *Canadian Geographic Travel* staff share their favourite fall travel destinations.

**Haida Gwaii, B.C.** A visit to the remote Haida Gwaii archipelago is at the top of my travel bucket list for fall. The quiet shoulder seasons offer the chance to establish a more intimate relationship with a place, and this is the trip of a lifetime after all, so why not have the islands (almost) to yourself? Coined the “Canadian Galapagos” for their endemic wildlife, including their own subspecies of black bear, the temperate rainforest islands are packed with wilderness and cultural exploration opportunities, whether it’s spying colourful sea stars in intertidal zones, paddling the plentiful kayak routes, surfing (the season begins in October), fishing (coho salmon and halibut are in season) or immersing yourself in the rich artistic traditions of the Haida people.

—*Jessica Finn, photo editor*

**Blue Mountain, Collingwood, Ont.** One of my favourite places to visit is Blue Mountain, a year-round resort that’s perhaps best known for its skiing. But I’m no skier. So instead I go in the fall, which for me is the ideal season to spend time there. It’s less busy, the temperature is more comfortable and the deciduous trees of the surrounding Niagara Escarpment landscape are in their full autumn awesomeness. Then there are the off-season

—*Harry Wilson, senior editor*



ski-hill attractions, including an open-air gondola ride, mountain biking, hiking, off-road Segway trails, ziplining, golfing and the ridiculously fun gravity-powered Ridge Runner Mountain Coaster. No wonder I’ve never learned to ski.

—*Aaron Kylie, editor*

**Fredericksburg, Texas** As beautiful as fall is in Canada, as the season nears, all I can do is think about ways to delay it. My strategy? Head south to the warmth of Texas Hill Country and the old-fashioned charm of Fredericksburg, a small city about 110 kilometres northwest of San Antonio. There’s loads to do here — catching the Gillespie County Fair (the oldest continuous event of its kind in Texas), wandering historic Main Street or seeing live music in legendary Luckenbach — but the real draw for me is the wine. Texas is the fifth-largest wine-producing state in the United States, and Fredericksburg Wine Road 290 — an association of 15 wineries along Highway 290 on either side of the city — is the place to wet your whistle.

Clockwise from LEFT: on high in Haida Gwaii, B.C.; treats to tempt your palate along Fredericksburg Wine Road 290 in Texas; hiking New Brunswick’s Fundy Footpath; ziplining in Collingwood, Ont.



**Fundy Footpath, N.B.** My newest favourite hidden gem weaves its way along the New Brunswick coast from Fundy National Park through 49 undulating kilometres of old-growth forest to Big Salmon River. The trail is remote and outstanding, offering a huge variety of landscapes: 300-metre-high cliffs, sandy beaches, wildflower-lined streams and, of course, the twice-a-day high tides, which can trap you if your departure time is miscalculated. The weather, too, will keep you on your toes, with the East Coast’s famous fog sometimes obscuring the path’s white markers. Given the tides and general inaccessibility in the case of an emergency, it’s a good idea to opt for an outfitter such as World Expeditions, which uses local guides who dish up gourmet campfire meals.

—*Sabrina Doyle, new media editor*



Read more about a visit to Fredericksburg at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/radar](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/radar) and let us know on Twitter (@CanGeo) or Facebook ([facebook.com/cangeo](https://facebook.com/cangeo)) what destination is on your radar this fall.

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## WEEKEND GETAWAY

# County life

ONTARIO'S PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY was made for the weekend. The 1,048-square-kilometre rural region, only a few hours' drive from both Toronto and Ottawa, juts into Lake Ontario south of Belleville and offers a wide range of activities, restaurants, shops, accommodations and more, much of which can be easily enjoyed over two days (although one could spend many weekends discovering all the county's treasures). Autumn is a particularly fine time to visit, with a number of signature events that highlight the region's agricultural and natural heritage. Here's a selection of the county's can't-miss fall fixtures.

—Aaron Kylie

## 1 THE HUBB EATERY AND LOUNGE

You can't miss the grand Victorian house on Main Street in Bloomfield that's home to this popular restaurant and Angeline's Inn. Make reservations for the cosy dining room, which features a seasonal menu inspired by the county's local fare, and pray the Lake Ontario pickerel is available when you visit. [angelines.ca](http://angelines.ca)

## 2 PUMPKINFEST

Massive pumpkins, some weighing hundreds of kilograms, are paraded down Wellington's main street annually on a mid-October Saturday (Oct. 17 this year). Crowds of people, many adorned in bright-orange knit pumpkin beanies, turn out for the festivities, which culminate in a giant vegetable weigh-off. [pec.on.ca/pumpkinfest](http://pec.on.ca/pumpkinfest)

## 3 LAKE ON THE MOUNTAIN PROVINCIAL PARK

The panoramic view from this small, day-use park that sits 60 metres above Lake Ontario is a must-see. Sights include the small lake for which the park is named and the free Glenora Ferry, which shuttles vehicles across the Bay of Quinte along Highway 33. [ontarioparks.com/park/lakeonthemountain](http://ontarioparks.com/park/lakeonthemountain)

## 4 WELLINGTON MUSHROOM FARM

Looking for a delicious portabella mushroom to top a county steak? Locals head to the Highline Mushrooms' company farm near Bloomfield, which sells fresh white, brown and portabella mushrooms from its factory facility. Tours are available by appointment. [highlinemushrooms.com](http://highlinemushrooms.com)

## 5 TASTE COMMUNITY GROWN/ COUNTYLICIOUS

Sample the efforts of the county's best chefs, winemakers and beer, spirit and cider companies, along with fresh produce from local farmers, each September (Sept. 26 this year) at the TASTE Community Grown event at the Crystal Palace in Picton. Local restaurateurs also host Countylicious, which features three-course fixed-price menus at select establishments from Nov. 4 to 29 this year. [tastecommunitygrown.com](http://tastecommunitygrown.com), [countylicious.com](http://countylicious.com)

## 6 COUNTY CIDER COMPANY

Tutored tastings of four ciders are on offer here in the small community of Waupoos for just \$5. The company's award-winning alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages are made from 12 varieties of heirloom and cider apples grown on the Howes family farm and nearby orchards. [countycider.com](http://countycider.com)

## 7 BLACK RIVER CHEESE

Turophiles will have trouble pulling themselves away from the sample platters at this farmer-owned establishment near Milford. A county staple for more than a century, the company's handcrafted cheeses — among them classic and naturally aged cheddars, plain and flavoured mozzarella, and fresh curds — are made with milk from local farms. [blackrivercheese.com](http://blackrivercheese.com)

## 8 PRINCE EDWARD POINT BIRD OBSERVATORY

More than 300 species of birds have been recorded in this national wildlife area at the extreme southeast tip of the county. Fall banding takes place daily between mid-August and Oct. 31 — don't miss the saw-whet owl banding each evening in October at 8:30 p.m. [peptbo.ca](http://peptbo.ca)

## 9 COUNTY WINERIES

With more than 30 wineries scattered across the county, you're spoiled for choice in what is the fastest-growing viticultural region in Ontario. So where to begin? Head to the west end, near Coneston, where nearly two-thirds of the wineries are clustered. [princeedwardcountywine.ca](http://princeedwardcountywine.ca)

## 10 THE ACOUSTIC GRILL

Tucked away just off Main Street in Picton, this casual spot with rustic style hosts live music on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. The highlight of the comfort-food-inspired menu? The Acoustic Jam, a handmade Angus beef burger with lettuce, tomato, red onion, horseradish mayo, corn salsa and caramelized onions. [theacousticgrill.ca](http://theacousticgrill.ca)



Read more about Prince Edward County's top sights at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/pec](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/pec).

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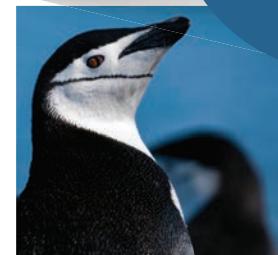
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## FOOD

## A harvest menu

WHEN SUMMER'S LONG DAYS are behind us and the weather turns cool, there's no reason to mourn — at least not for the bons vivants among us. Come fall, Canada's dining tables are groaning with delights far more varied than that old standby of roast turkey and mashed potatoes, with everything from Arctic char to wild rice. Here's a roundup of some harvest-time specialties from across the nation.

—Michela Rosano

## ONTARIO

## PUMPKINS &amp; WINE

Howden, Funny Face, Small Sugar and Early Cheyenne Pie. Develop your pumpkin palate by tucking into these, just a few of the many varieties of fall's iconic fruit, typically ready to eat in September and October. Wash 'em down with a glass of wine from one of Niagara's wineries during the Niagara Wine Festival in September.

MANITOBA  
WILD RICE

The province's long, warm summer days make for ideal growing conditions for this nutty-flavoured species of water grass, a traditional aboriginal food that's harvested in early fall.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND  
ROCK CRAB & POTATOES

From April to October, the sweet and succulent rock crab is a must-try. Dish it up with a side of the island's claim-to-fame root vegetable, the potato, varieties of which include russet, white, red, yellow and blue.

QUEBEC  
WILD GAME

Cooler weather marks the arrival of hunting season in Quebec, and the popularity of wild game in the province is steadily increasing. Thanks to a pilot project started in 2014, 10 Quebec chefs were permitted to buy and serve wild game — think white-tailed deer, beaver and pheasant — something only restaurants in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nunavut have been allowed to do.

NOVA SCOTIA  
APPLES

There's seafood aplenty, sure, but to get a truly well-rounded taste of Nova Scotia, you have to sink your teeth into an apple or three, and the Annapolis Valley is the place to do it. Whether it's a Crimson Beauty, a Northern Spy or one of many others, the valley is renowned for its varieties, and the picking season runs until the end of October.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR  
PARTRIDGEBERRIES

The province is North America's largest producer of the tiny, tart berries (a.k.a. lingonberries or cowberries), which are used in baked goods, jams and sauces, especially from mid-September onward, when they're typically harvested.

ALBERTA  
GRASS-FED BEEF

Canada's beef capital ups its game in autumn, when grass-fed cattle that have been grazing all summer on wild grasses are butchered. This diet helps produce meat that's more tender than that of grain-fed cattle and is prized by chefs around the world. Look for it at local farms and markets throughout the season.

SASKATCHEWAN  
CHOKECHERRIES

Long eaten dried by First Nations people, these deep-purple wild cherries, which can be bitter or sweet and are harvested as late as September, are today more often used in jams, syrups and even wines. Check out the Lancer Chokecherry Festival (Oct. 9 to 11 this year) in the village of Lancer, if you can.

THE NORTH  
ARCTIC CHAR

The meaty, coral-coloured flesh of wild Arctic char starts to appear on menus during the fish's annual fall run, when it returns from the Arctic Ocean to freshwater lakes and rivers to spawn. The fish is available fresh into September.

NEW BRUNSWICK  
CARAQUET OYSTERS

Named for the bay where they're harvested, these bivalves are at their peak in the fall. Small and with a mild taste, they were a favourite of the province's early settlers, and today are celebrated every October at the Festival des Huîtres in Maisonnette.

BRITISH COLUMBIA  
WILD MUSHROOMS

The province's shady forests and glens are the perfect environment for wild mushrooms, and in the fall you can forage for fungi such as porcini, chanterelle and yellowfoot. Make sure you have an edible variety, though: some mushrooms are toxic.



Check out regional recipes from Canada's top chefs at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/recipe](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/recipe).

# HEROIC VOYAGE, HISTORIC DISCOVERY

## Franklin Expedition Stamps and collectibles

Canada Post salutes the 2014 discovery of HMS *Erebus* with this special collection of stamps and collectibles. *Erebus* was the flagship of Sir John Franklin and one of two ships – both lost – that took part in his ill-fated 1845 voyage to find the Northwest Passage. This issue includes domestic and international rate stamps, an uncut press sheet and a framed pane with a special metallic ink cancel. Make them part of your collection today.

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Postes Canada célèbre la découverte du HMS *Erebus* avec l'émission d'un ensemble spécial de timbres et d'articles de collection. *Erebus* était le navire amiral de sir John Franklin et l'un des deux navires disparus qui faisaient partie de l'expédition cherchant le passage du Nord-Ouest en 1845. Cette émission comprend des timbres aux tarifs des régimes intérieur et international, une planche non coupée et un feuillet encadré comprenant un cachet d'oblitération à encre métallique unique. Ajoutez-les à votre collection dès aujourd'hui.



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## THREE VENUES

## Iqaluit

By Nick Walker

## 1 FAMILY

Iqaluit might be Canada's most walkable capital. In a few hours of on-foot touring, you can cover most in-town attractions — even the canary-yellow international airport is just a kilometre from the city's heart. Start at the Unikkaarvik Visitor Centre (RIGHT), where you can see impressive Inuit cultural displays and sea ice and wildlife dioramas and rent audio walking guides. Don't skip Nunavut's legislative assembly chambers, adorned with tapestries, sealskin chairs and a narwhal-tusk mace. As reward for roaming, head to Brian Twerdin and former mayor Elisapee Sheutiapik's Grind & Brew Café. They've been serving classic diner fare and coffee from Frobisher Bay's edge since 1998, and their recent specialty — thick, hearty pizzas (try the Grind & Brew Special or the Caribou) — since 2009.



## 2 ADVENTURE

## ADVENTURE

Getting to Subarctic wilderness from Iqaluit is easy. Deciding on the best way to explore nearby territorial parkland is the tricky part. If you arrive in town in September, before freeze-up, try a custom boating trip with local outfitter Arctic Kingdom, which can motor you to Qaummaarviit Territorial Park, a rocky island in Frobisher Bay covered with 1,000-year-old archeological remains of the Thule, ancestors of modern Inuit. After the snow flies, though, Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park is a short trek west of the airport, and the quickest way to surround yourself in northern crag and solitude for a day. Dogsled excursions (LEFT) by Northwinds will be running here by early November (snowpack-dependent, of course). [arctickingdom.com](http://arctickingdom.com), [northwinds-arctic.com](http://northwinds-arctic.com)

## 3 ARTS

This island city is a culture magnet. The major traditional arts festivals are Toonik Tyme (spring) and Alianait (summer), but the annual Nunavut Trades Show (Sept. 22 to 24, 2015) is another perfect place to see northerners flaunt their cultural creations. The show attracts reps from every industry in the North, but you can also buy tapestries from Pangnirtung, prints from Cape Dorset or carvings and all manner of artwork and fashion (RIGHT) from across the territory, and watch spectacular performances by drum dancers and throat singers. Don't despair, though, if you miss this event. Iqaluit's arts scene hums year-round, whether you want to admire the newest exhibit and gift-shop handicrafts at the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum (an old Hudson's Bay Company building) or decide to haggle with local carvers who will approach your hotel restaurant table with everything from trinkets to sizable, and often beautiful, soapstone carvings. [nunavuttradeshow.ca](http://nunavuttradeshow.ca)



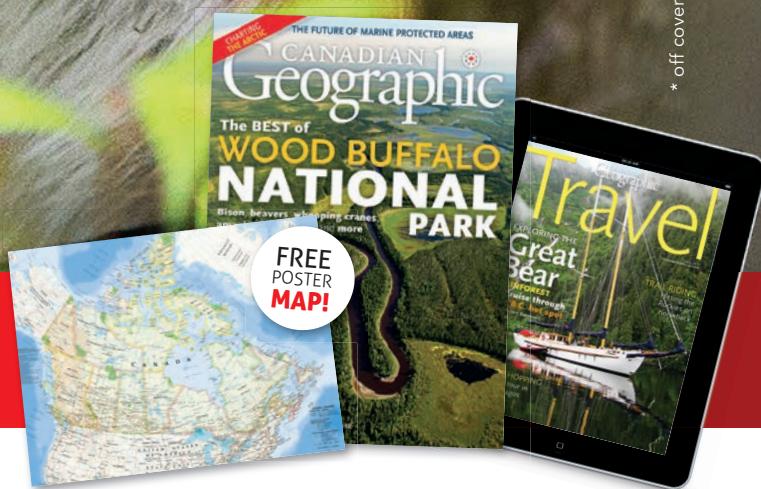
Read about Arctic Kingdom's new Arctic Weekend Getaway, a three-day trip to explore Iqaluit and the Frobisher Bay region, at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ikaluit](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ikaluit).

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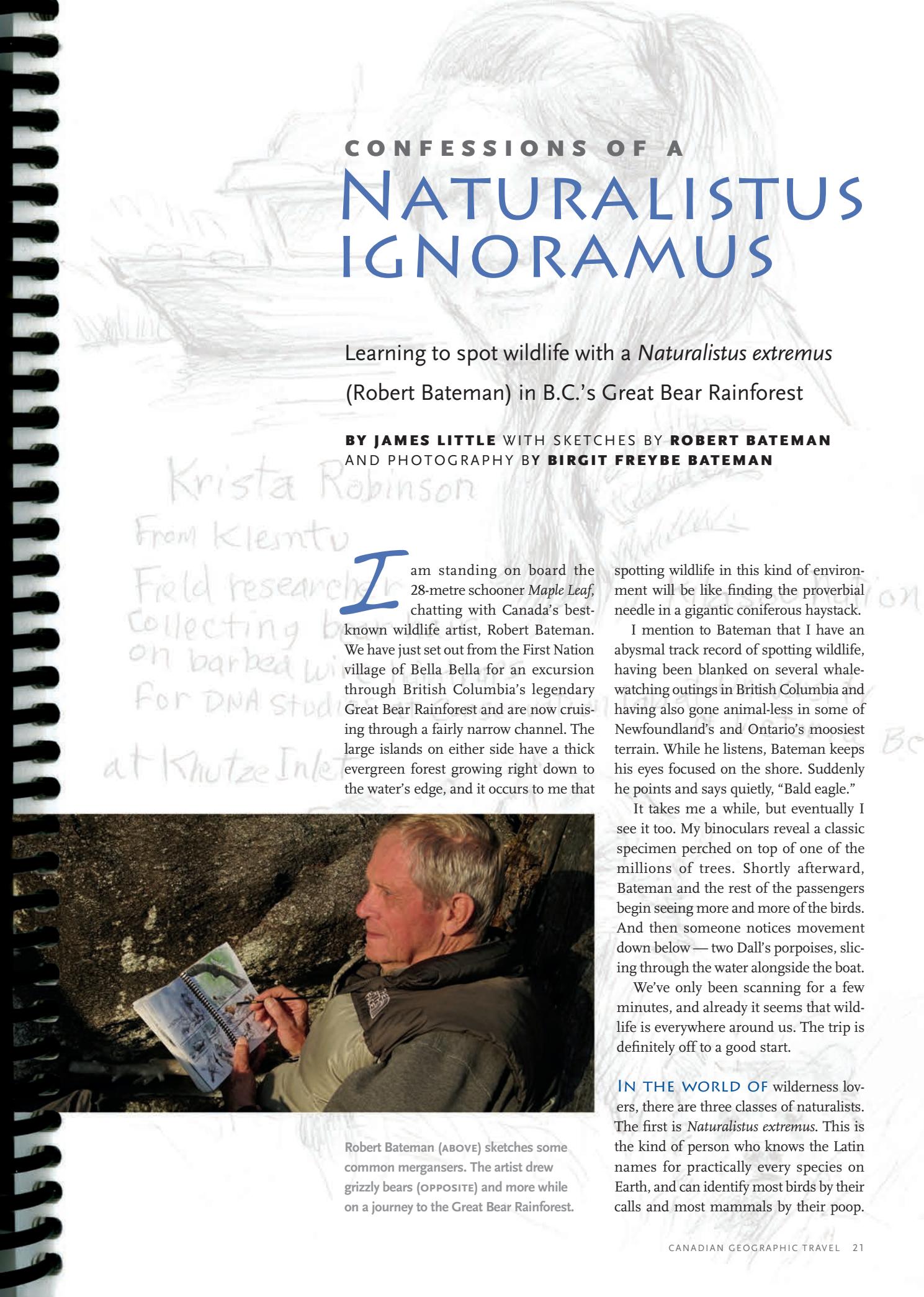
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Mother Grizzly  
+ 3 Cubs  
Feeding on Sedge

at  
Khutzeymateen

June 22





# CONFES S I O N S O F A NATURALISTUS IGNORAMUS

Learning to spot wildlife with a *Naturalistus extremus*  
(Robert Bateman) in B.C.'s Great Bear Rainforest

BY JAMES LITTLE WITH SKETCHES BY ROBERT BATEMAN  
AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BIRGIT FREYBE BATEMAN

Krista Robinson  
From Klesmtu  
Field researcher  
Collecting birds  
on barbed wire  
For DNA studies  
at Khutzeymateen  
BC

**I** am standing on board the 28-metre schooner *Maple Leaf*, chatting with Canada's best-known wildlife artist, Robert Bateman. We have just set out from the First Nation village of Bella Bella for an excursion through British Columbia's legendary Great Bear Rainforest and are now cruising through a fairly narrow channel. The large islands on either side have a thick evergreen forest growing right down to the water's edge, and it occurs to me that

spotting wildlife in this kind of environment will be like finding the proverbial needle in a gigantic coniferous haystack.

I mention to Bateman that I have an abysmal track record of spotting wildlife, having been blanked on several whale-watching outings in British Columbia and having also gone animal-less in some of Newfoundland's and Ontario's moosiest terrain. While he listens, Bateman keeps his eyes focused on the shore. Suddenly he points and says quietly, "Bald eagle."

It takes me a while, but eventually I see it too. My binoculars reveal a classic specimen perched on top of one of the millions of trees. Shortly afterward, Bateman and the rest of the passengers begin seeing more and more of the birds. And then someone notices movement down below — two Dall's porpoises, slicing through the water alongside the boat.

We've only been scanning for a few minutes, and already it seems that wildlife is everywhere around us. The trip is definitely off to a good start.



Robert Bateman (ABOVE) sketches some common mergansers. The artist drew grizzly bears (OPPOSITE) and more while on a journey to the Great Bear Rainforest.

**IN THE WORLD OF wilderness lovers, there are three classes of naturalists. The first is *Naturalistus extremus*. This is the kind of person who knows the Latin names for practically every species on Earth, and can identify most birds by their calls and most mammals by their poop.**

June 24



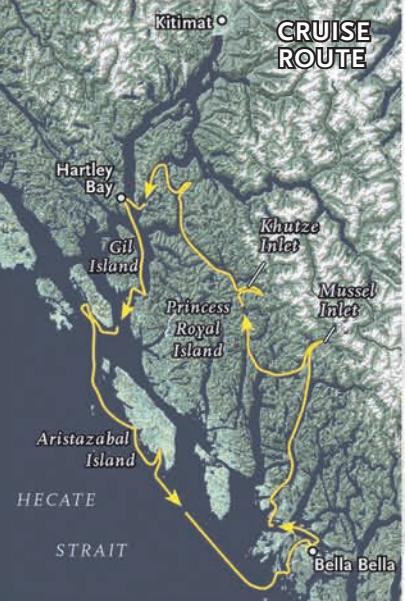
Herring ball  
with many  
Rhinoceros  
Auklets  
and  
Bald Eagles



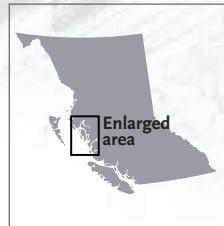
Evening on  
Campania Island.

## Steller's Seafarers

IN HUHUAH



MAPS: CHRIS BRACKLEY/CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC



Bateman's sketches of bald eagles, a rhinoceros auklet, and an inviting campfire (OPPOSITE). The *Maple Leaf* encounters a harbour seal perched on a floating log (BELOW).

The next is *Naturalistus normalus*, the kind of person who at least knows their basic birds and plants, and can tell you that a “starfish” should really be called a “sea star” because, of course, it’s not a fish. And finally there’s *Naturalistus ignoramus*, the kind of person who likes seeing wildlife but frankly has a pathetically limited knowledge of the natural world.

As you’d expect, most of the crew and passengers on our nine-day exploration through the Great Bear — the huge coastal rainforest between Vancouver Island and Alaska — fall into the first two categories. The *Naturalistus extremus* cohort includes (among others): Robert Bateman, who has been painting nature since he was a boy exploring Toronto’s wild corners; Bateman’s wife, Birgit, who is an accomplished wildlife photographer and seems to be able to recognize the call of a Swainson’s thrush from a kilometre away; and captain Kevin Smith, who bought the 111-year-old *Maple Leaf* in 2001 and has since logged thousands of hours sailing along British Columbia’s most remote coastlines.

*We've only been scanning  
for a few minutes,  
and already it seems that wildlife  
is everywhere around us.*



The majority of the eight passengers, who hail from all across Canada, belong to the *Naturalistus normalus* class. They have come on the late-June trip to see one of the world's iconic wilderness areas and the wildlife that lives within it. They are also huge Bateman fans, obviously thrilled to get the chance to spend time with their 85-year-old hero. Several are surprised to discover that they will be sharing the same sleeping quarters.

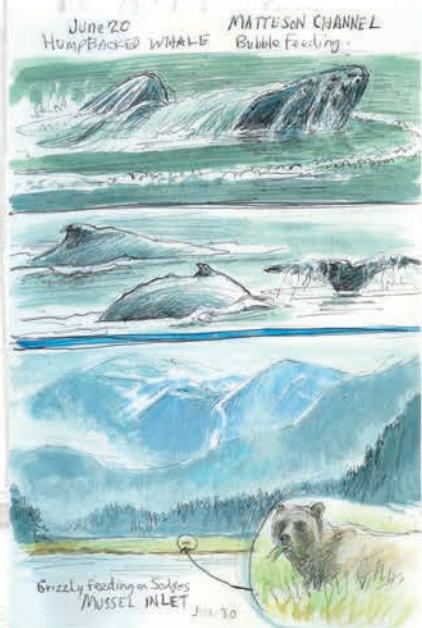
And then there is the lone representative of the *Naturalistus ignoramus* class: me. The sad truth is that I'd have a hard time identifying the handful of trees in my own backyard. And yet I do love seeing wildlife, especially the big stuff — what might properly be called "megafauna." So I suppose I could be further classified as *Naturalistus ignoramus, megafaunatic*.

*Bateman has never seen whales bubble netting before, and later reproduces it in one of the many sketches he makes during the trip.*

**WHEN IT COMES** to fauna, it doesn't get much more mega than a humpback whale, and that's what we encounter mid-morning on our second day as we cruise north on the wide Mathieson Channel.

Humpback sightings have become increasingly common in the Great Bear Rainforest over the last 20 years, but this one is doing something that apparently still isn't seen all that often in these waters — it's feeding using a method called "bubble netting." The whale is diving deep and then releasing bubbles in a circular pattern as it swims back to the surface. Small fish are effectively trapped within the bubbles and, as they rise, are concentrated in a nice bite-sized area on the surface, where the whale opens its mouth.

Bateman's sketchbook shows humpback whales and a grizzly feeding on sedges (BELOW). Photographers captured similar images, such as the distinctive fluke of a diving humpback whale (BOTTOM).





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for both CF and SD cards, USB 3.0 connectivity, built-in pop-up flash, a built-in Speedlite transmitter for controlling off-camera flash, and even built-in GPS for automatic location tagging. Yes, you may be lost but your camera never is.

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Of course, the more knowledgeable naturalists on board are delighted to witness this activity. (Bateman has never seen it before, and later reproduces it in one of the many sketches he makes during the trip.) But I am even more delighted as we then follow the whale at a respectful distance for almost an hour, watching its

feeding on the grass-like sedges at an estuary like this. So we load into the *Maple Leaf*'s two inflatable dinghies and head in for a look. We are greeted by harbour seals (adorable), Bonaparte's gulls and a flotilla of marbled murrelets, small seabirds that I'm informed nest only in old-growth forest. And then someone spots the bear — a

Robert Bateman (in green hat) and fellow passengers stand on the *Maple Leaf*'s deck as it approaches the shore (ABOVE), marking an opportunity for a close-up view of craggy cliffs and waterfalls (BELOW).

*I ask Bateman how he'd rate the experience. 'That was right up there near the top,' he says.*

blowhole spouting and its flukes undulating in and out of the water.

Later in the day, we head deep into the heart of the Great Bear, to the end of a mist-enshrouded fiord called Mussel Inlet (so named by Captain George Vancouver's men back in 1793). A river flows into the steep-sided bay here, delivering not only rainwater, but also meltwater from the snowy Coast Range peaks, which we can see to the east.

Captain Smith has told us that, though we probably won't be seeing the famous white spirit bear at this time of year, we have a good chance of spotting a grizzly

alone, light-brown grizzly on a stretch of rocky shoreline. It wanders into the woods, but when we return a short while later, it's back, lying on a rock. As we watch, with cameras firing, the bear stands up and then saunters along the shoreline, eating sedges as it goes. Our boats drift quite close, but the bear pays no attention. It's an unforgettable half hour.

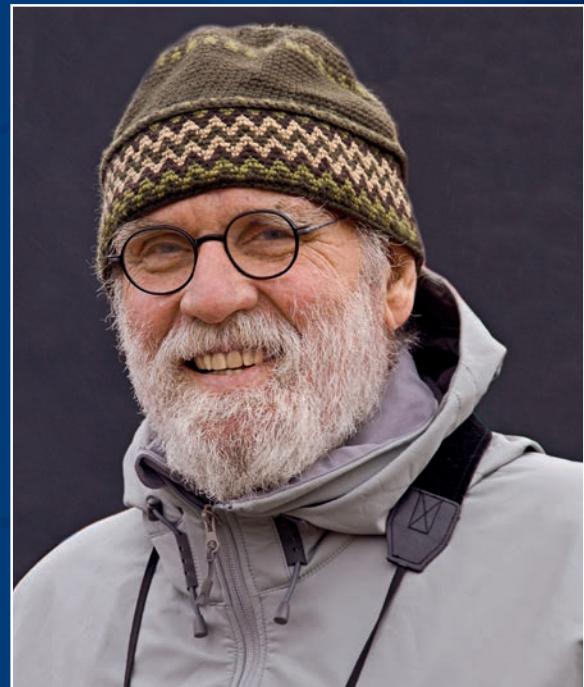
Speaking of unforgettable, Bateman is also very pleased to spot a Eurasian collared-dove, which he's never seen in Canada before, and a black swift, which he's never seen anywhere before.

I think I missed them.





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# The "Maple Leaf" with Grizzly

**SO HOW DO YOU** top a day like that? In the Great Bear, it's easy. You just weigh anchor and head somewhere else. In our case, we move on to the end of another remote inlet, called Khutze. Along the way, we see our second humpback, some Steller's sea lions and more Dall's porpoises. But it's at Khutze, where another river flows down from the mountains, that things get really interesting.

Once again, we pile into the dinghies to explore the estuary. Captain Smith scans the area for bears, and then decides we should proceed as far as we can upriver. We are fighting against a strong current when we come upon a scene straight out of a *Dramatic Wildlife Moments!* video. Up ahead, three common mergansers — one adult and two young — are treading water at the side of the river, while above them, a bald eagle sits on a tree branch. As we approach, the eagle swoops down repeatedly from its perch, attempting to grab one of the ducklings, but to our amazement, the mergansers somehow manage

*James Little was the editor of Explore from 2000 to 2012, before which he was editor at Outdoor Canada. He lives in Toronto.*

## BEYOND THE WILDLIFE

**W**ildlife-watching may have been the main feature of our Great Bear show, but the rest of the lineup was also spectacular. We went for a dip in a hot spring (RIGHT, TOP), roasted marshmallows on a beach bonfire (RIGHT, BOTTOM), hiked in a Dr. Seuss-like wonderland complete with mini-pompom trees, tried to learn nautical lingo while "dousing" the sails, watched several presentations by Robert Bateman (during which we discovered he likes blue jays, Kurt Vonnegut and truly benevolent dictators, but is less keen on Steller's jays, plywood and interplanetary travel), visited the First Nation hamlet of Hartley Bay, toured a whale research station, felt the spray of a Niagara-like waterfall while sitting on the bowsprit, explored a stretch of uncharted coastline where possibly nobody had ever been before, did a little fishing



to avoid its attacks. Finally, the adult merganser leads the two young ducks on a bold bid across the river to reach cover on the far bank. Though I suppose we shouldn't be taking sides — after all, the eagle is probably hungry — we nonetheless cheer when the three ducks make it to safety.

A couple of hours later, we head back up the river looking for bears, after someone on the ship sees activity along the riverbank. As we draw near the spot, a

A lone grizzly bear feeds on sedges at the edge of an estuary (ABOVE).

female grizzly suddenly stands up, with green sedge in her mouth, and then turns and moves uphill. After a few moments, we see her climbing a cliff above with three small cubs. Back on the ship, we celebrate the sighting with a whisky toast.

and consumed a never-ending assortment of delicious snacks. Three of us also celebrated the longest day of the year by doing the Summer Solstice Walk — one nautical mile (68 laps) around the deck.

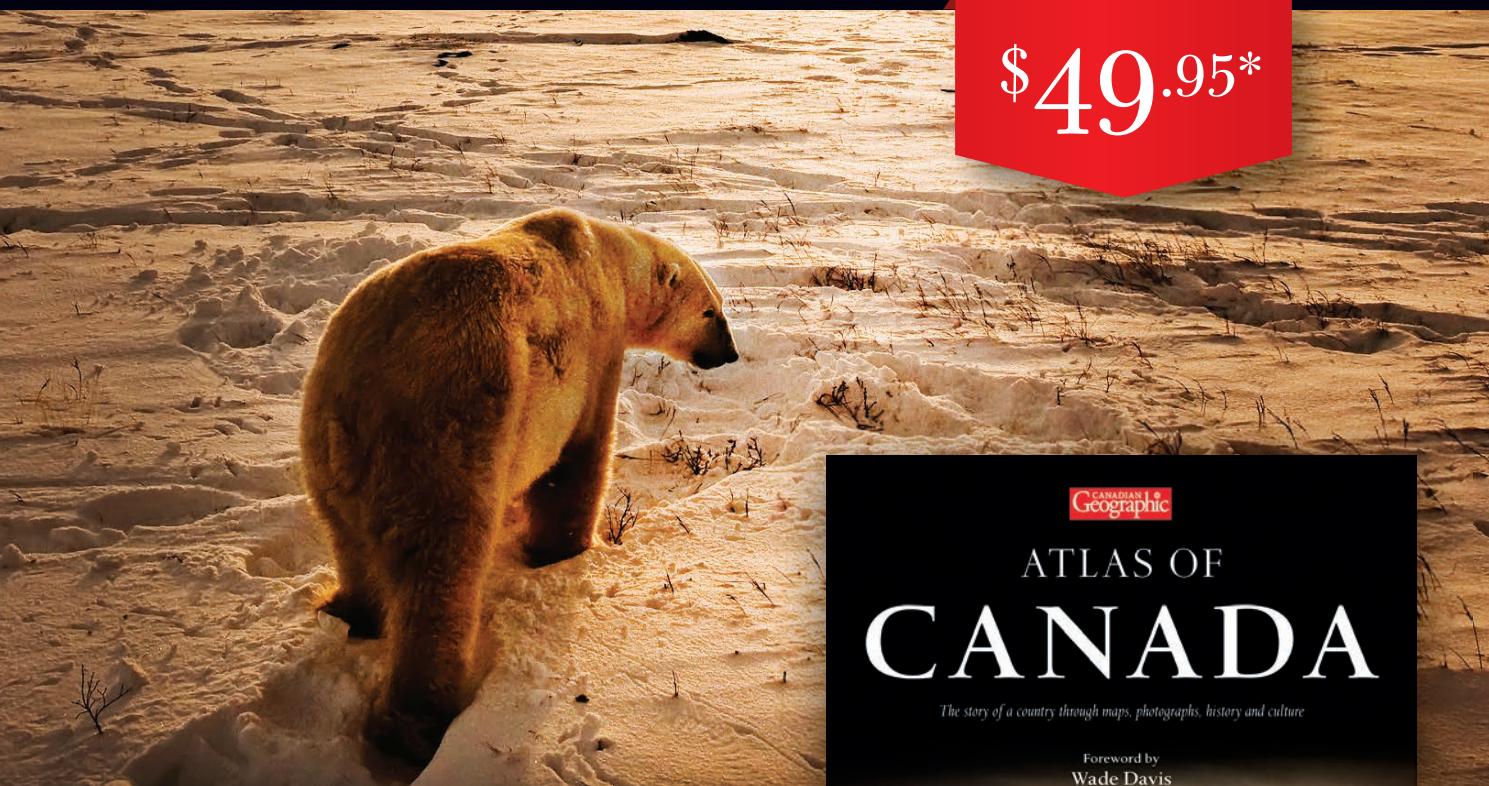
But the real non-wildlife highlight of the trip was the time we spent together in the evening around the mahogany dining table. Every night we enjoyed a gourmet meal prepared by chef James Maine, and as the wine flowed, so did the conversation. It was at dinner that I learned one of my fellow boatmates had jumped off an iceberg wearing only socks and a Canadian flag, that another had dated one of Prince Charles's bodyguards, that another had delivered 100 babies in a year, and that Bateman is not only passionate about the future of our planet, but also once spotted a UFO.



# EXPERIENCE THE SPIRIT OF CANADA IN THIS ONE GREAT ATLAS

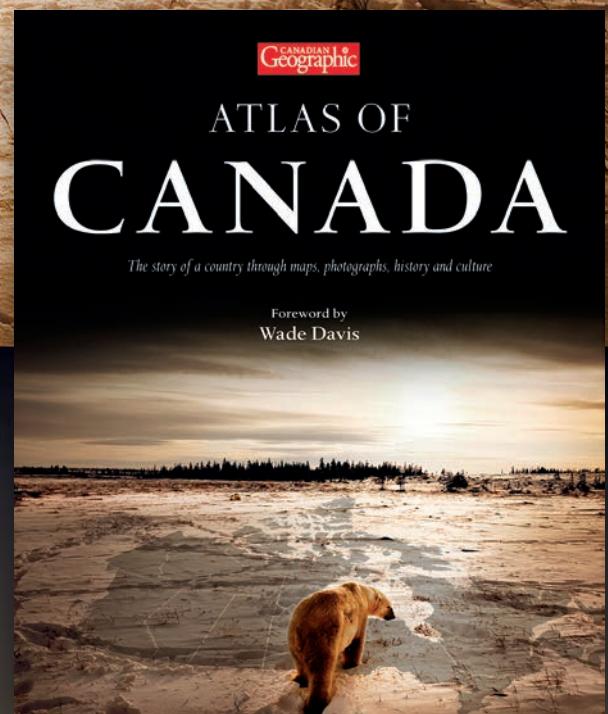
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## GREAT BEAR RAINFOREST

JUNE  
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GREAT BEAR  
RAINFOREST  
ON BOARD THE  
MAPLE LEAF

The next morning, some bear researchers from the local Kitasoo First Nation visit the inlet and find the sow bear with her three cubs exactly where we had seen them. They invite us to come for another look. We arrive to find the mother bear and her three young-of-the-year right on the shoreline, and this time, the mother is in no hurry to leave. While she is feeding non-stop on the sedges, her triplets put on quite a show, play fighting and just generally having fun. At times, we float within eight metres of the bears, but they never appear to be threatened, though the young ones occasionally stand up and give us curious stares. We sit entranced for almost two hours. Afterward, I ask Bateman how he'd rate the experience. "That was right up there near the top," he says. "There will never be anything quite like that again."



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HUMPBACKED WHALE

MATTESON CHANNEL  
Bubble feeding

A female grizzly and her cubs (OPPOSITE) among the sedge near the shore, a scene not dissimilar to another of Bateman's sketches (BELOW).

The "Maple Leaf" with Grizzly

**AS THE TRIP GOES ON**, the wildlife list continues to grow. In addition to more eagles, whales, porpoises and a colony of smelly sea lions, we see harlequin ducks, a black bear, rhinoceros auklets, a mink, sandhill cranes, a greater yellowlegs, black-tailed deer, a northern fur seal, a sea otter and something called a hooded nudibranch. At one anchorage, everyone else even hears a wolf pack howling. Unfortunately, while they are listening to the call of the wild, I am down below, answering the call of nature.

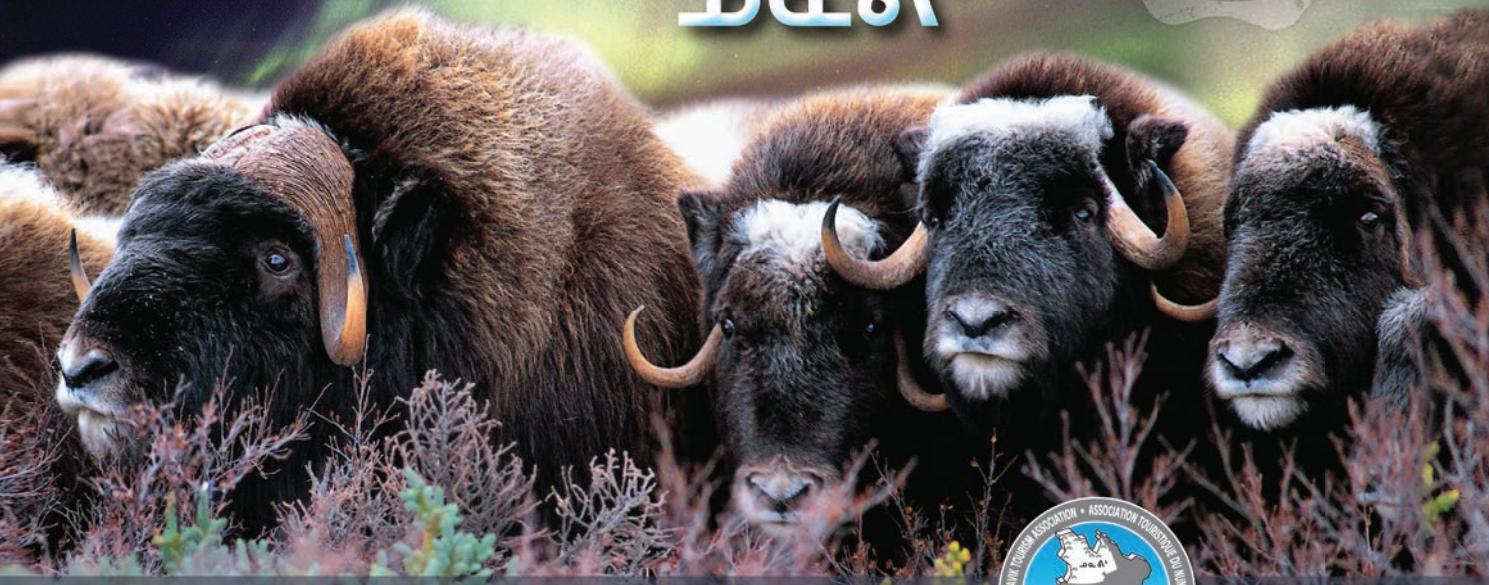
The only thing missing from our list? Orcas. But on our very last day, when we have almost arrived back at Bella Bella, a pod appears as if on cue. There are eight of them — including one small calf — and they swim past us like the world's most graceful synchronized swimmers, their giant fins riding high above the water.

It seems that will be our final wildlife sighting of the trip. But then, at Bella Bella's small airport, while we are waiting for our flight back to Vancouver, Bateman points to a distant tree. "Bald eagle," he says. And this time I see it instantly. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*.



See more photos from James Little's cruise to the Great Bear Rainforest with Robert Bateman at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/gbrf](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/gbrf).

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## Notes from Sir Christopher Ondaatje on his journey to one of the world's most famous wild places



Bartolomé Island's Pinnacle Rock (ABOVE) is one of the most famous landmarks in the Galapagos, which is renowned for wildlife such as green sea turtles (TOP).

**T**It was, says Sir Christopher Ondaatje of his journey to Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, the "expedition of a lifetime." That's saying a lot, considering Ondaatje, a financier and publishing mogul turned philanthropist and author who has written several books about his travels, has had a host of incredible experiences.

Ondaatje, who wanted to see for himself the creatures that shaped Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, sailed among the islands, catching sight of wildlife that can't be seen anywhere else. The map on the following pages traces Ondaatje's route and includes some of his observations on a place that remains a natural wonder — for now. "It's inevitable that tourism will change the face of the islands," he says. "That hasn't happened to too great a degree yet, but if you can, visit them sooner rather than later."

## Day 1 | SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

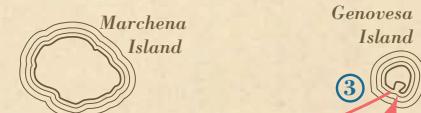
After flying into Seymour airport on Baltra Island from Quito, Ecuador's capital, I transfer to *Eclipse*, a 48-passenger cruise ship that would be home for the next week. We sail to Las Bachas beach on Santa Cruz, where a solitary brown pelican watches us as we pick our way through hordes of marine iguanas. A great blue heron waits patiently over a green sea turtle's nest for some movement, indicating that the young have been hatched. Blue-footed boobies swirl, twist and dive for fish all around us, an astonishing aerodynamic display only a few feet from the shoreline.

## Day 2 | SAN SALVADOR ISLAND

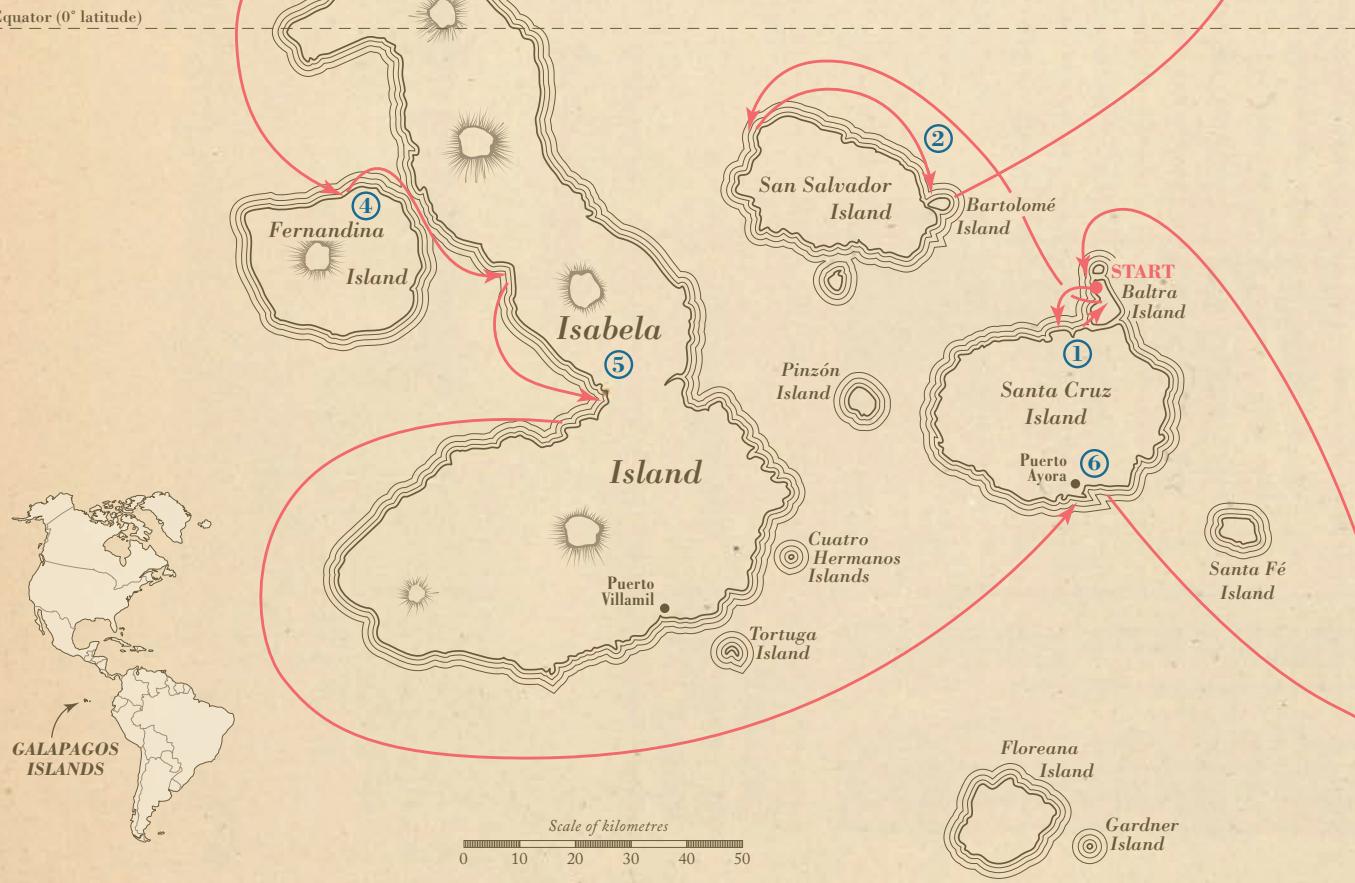
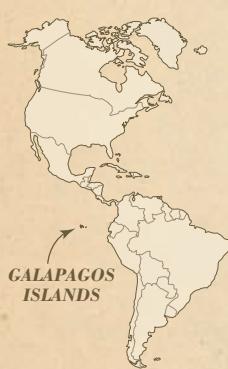
On a morning excursion to Puerto Egas on the western side of San Salvador, we see sea lions basking in the morning sun and are surprised by a pair of oystercatchers mating by the side of the rocky beach. We also set foot on our first black sand beach, the colour of which comes from lava, and see still more iguanas, which are almost the same shade as the sand. A Galapagos hawk perches on a thorn acacia, and we see a Galapagos dove, a Galapagos mockingbird and some large ground finches — one of the 13 species of finch that played a key role in the development of Darwin's theory of evolution.

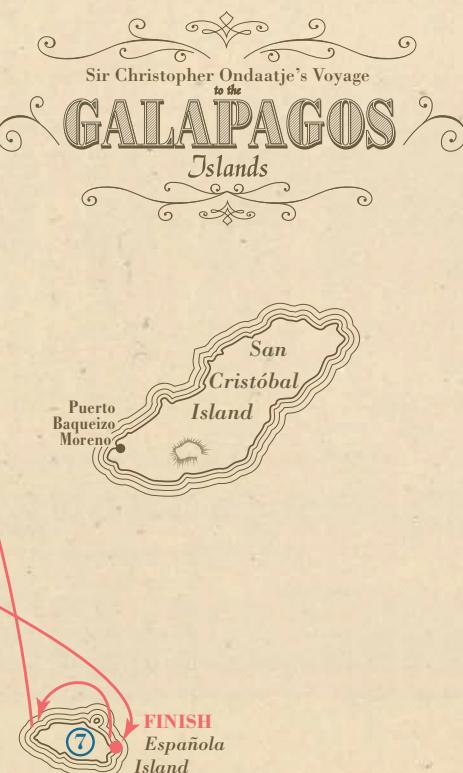
## BARTOLOMÉ ISLAND

It's late in the afternoon as we sail past San Salvador's Buccaneer Cove (so named because it was a hideout for pirates in the 17th and 18th centuries) and arrive at Bartolomé, famous for its Pinnacle Rock, probably the most recognized landmark in the Galapagos. We hike to the island's highest point, frigate birds hovering overhead and sea lions playing in the distance, and have incredible views of what resembles an almost arid moonscape.



Equator (0° latitude)





### Day 3 | GENOVESA ISLAND

During the night, we sail northeast, across the equator and toward Genovesa, the horseshoe shape of which was formed by a volcano that erupted and eventually collapsed on one side, creating Darwin Bay, home to a conglomeration of seabirds. Red-footed boobies, Nazca boobies, red-billed tropicbirds, frigate birds — all with little fear of us, their lack of timidity stemming from a lack of predators.

### Day 4 | FERNANDINA ISLAND

After a long overnight journey, we arrive at Punta Espinoza, at the north end of Fernandina, the westernmost and most volcanically active of the Galapagos Islands. It's here that we first see the extraordinary Galapagos penguin — the only penguin species that lives on or north of the equator.

### Day 5 | ISABELA ISLAND

No doubt the most famous of the Galapagos reptiles is the giant tortoise (the word Galapagos is derived from an old Spanish word for tortoise), and Isabela, the largest of the islands, has more tortoises than all the other islands in the archipelago combined. Tomorrow promises a chance to see the creatures in the flesh. Meanwhile, when we land at Urbina Bay, it seems as if almost the entire beach is dotted with holes, or nests, where green sea turtles have laid their eggs.

### Day 6 | SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

After sailing around the southern end of Isabela and back to Santa Cruz, we tour the Charles Darwin Research Station in Puerto Ayora, a facility that has helped save the once-threatened reptile (whalers and buccaneers are believed to have killed between 100,000 and 200,000 of the tortoises in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries; today there are an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 tortoises on the islands). Afterward, we spend two hours among these slow giants in the lush Santa Cruz highlands.

### Day 7 | ESPAÑOLA ISLAND

We start early and in spectacular fashion at the southernmost of the islands, landing on the beach among more than 100 sea lions, who are quite unperturbed. After picking our way through nesting oystercatchers and boobies, we finally see what we've been waiting for all week: a waved albatross, the world's entire breeding population of which is believed to reside on the island. We marvel at its seven-foot wingspan before watching it land in a rocky field, seemingly exhausted. Then, with a long clumsy run, it's off again, soaring above us. What a sight. What an experience.

Can't wait to get to the Galapagos? Take a Google Street View tour of the islands, complete with glimpses of their famed wildlife, at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/galapagos](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/galapagos).

# The Galapagos

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



A trip to see the islands' wildlife (ABOVE) is a journey of a lifetime, but it also requires some serious planning, not to mention some serious spending. Here are a few quick tips to help get you started. For more information, visit [galapagos.org](http://galapagos.org) or [galapagospark.org](http://galapagospark.org).

### WHEN TO GO

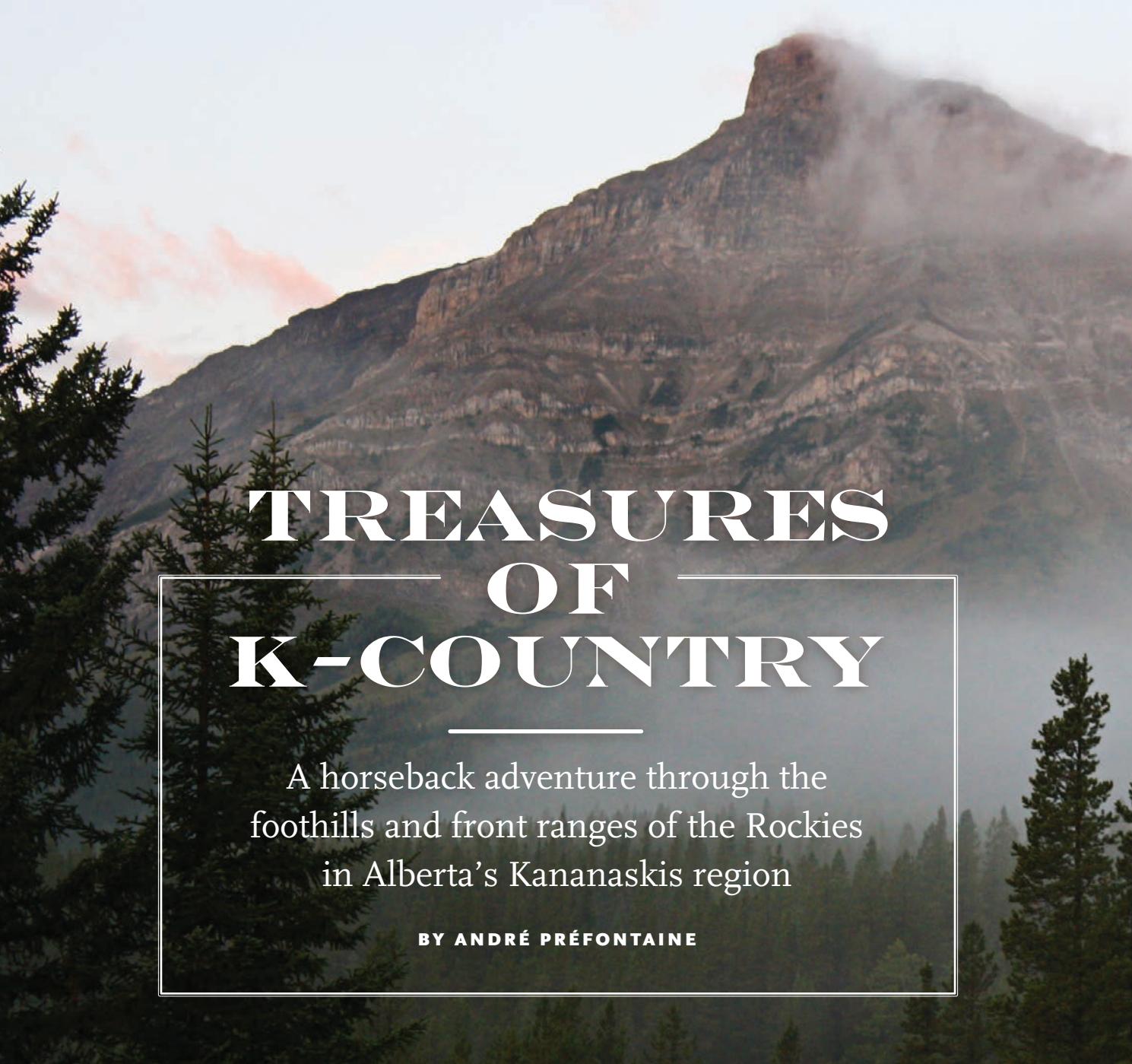
The islands are a year-round destination, but peak seasons are mid-June through early September and mid-December through mid-January; if visiting in either period, make your plans as early as possible.

### GETTING THERE AND AROUND

Most visitors fly from either Guayaquil or Quito, on Ecuador's mainland. You'll have already arranged one of the two best options for touring the islands: a multi-day cruise on an economy, tourist, first-class or luxury ship, or day trips from your accommodation. In either case, Galapagos National Park co-ordinates all visits and itineraries.

### WHAT IT COSTS

Not including the price of a flight from Canada to Quito or Guayaquil, here's a rough estimate of the costs involved (all prices in US\$): between \$400 and \$500 to get to and from the islands; \$100 to enter the park; between \$935 and \$10,000 for a cruise; and anywhere from about \$1,000 to \$3,500 for a multi-day hotel-based tour.



# TREASURES OF K-COUNTRY

A horseback adventure through the  
foothills and front ranges of the Rockies  
in Alberta's Kananaskis region

BY ANDRÉ PRÉFONTAINE

D

EWY MATTHEWS STRIDES OUT OF THE  
SMALL ROOM THAT SERVES AS ANCHOR D  
GUIDING AND OUTFITTING'S MAIN  
OFFICE, BUT, WITH HIS 10-GALLON HAT  
AND THICK MOUSTACHE, HE MIGHT AS  
WELL BE WALKING RIGHT OFF THE SET  
OF A JOHN WAYNE MOVIE.



"Now listen up," he says. "Those of you who are coming on the ride, line up in front of me." Just as you wouldn't argue with Rooster Cogburn, you don't argue with Dewy Matthews. All 13 of us move closer. "Who has been on a horse before?" Most of us timidly raise a hand, but it's a mixed bag; a few are experienced riders, while others have saddled up at some point in the near or distant past.

He sizes up each of us with a practised eye. "I'll call your names followed by another name," he says. "Don't forget it — that'll be your horse for the ride."

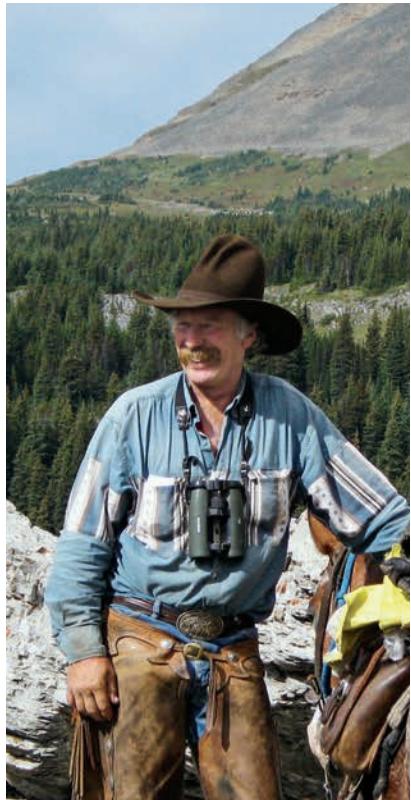
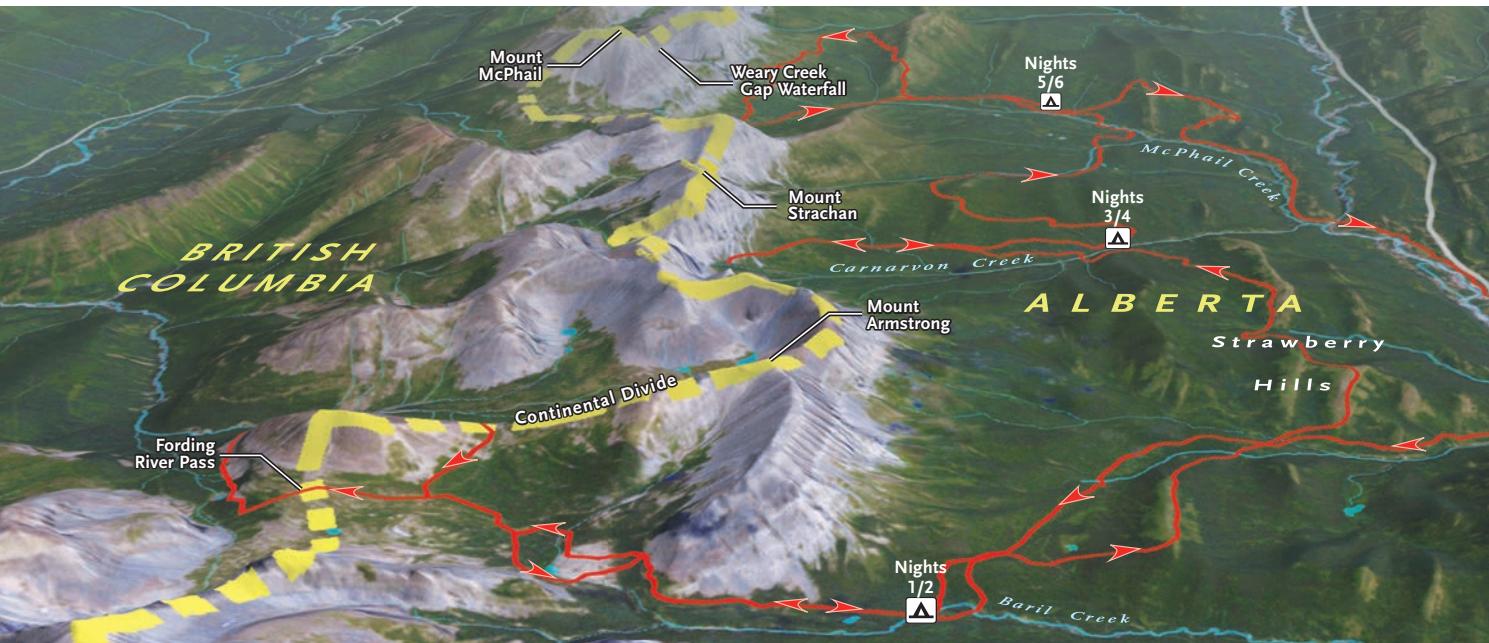
I get Earl, tall and grey, then names such as Muffin, Nevada, Bandit, Snipper and

Woody ring out in succession. Over the next few days of what Matthews calls the Great Divide Ride, a journey that will take our group high into Alberta's Kananaskis Country, across the Continental Divide and into British Columbia, I'll come to know my companions by two names — their own and that of their horse.

After loading the animals onto trailers and ourselves into vans, we head westward on Highway 40. It's early September, and while the fields have taken on a brownish tinge, they're still dotted with rolls of hay, reminding us that although we can see the foothills, and beyond them the mountains, we're still in farm country.



Spectacular scenery on the Great Divide Ride includes an early-morning view of Mount McPhail (TOP) and a lofty mountain plateau near the Continental Divide (ABOVE).



After we arrive at our departure point of Highwood Junction and mount up, I notice that Earl is eager to get going. A quick look around is enough to convince me that the excitement of being about to hit the trail is infectious, not only for the other horses but also for their riders.

**THE THREE CHUCKWAGONS** containing our gear and food for the next week are awaiting us when we arrive at Baril Creek, our camp for the next two days. The wagons took a more established route here, but we riders went the long way, heading out at Matthews' signal on a gradual, three-hour cross-country ascent toward Baril Creek, a gentle introduction to high-peaks horse riding. Occasionally, though, we caught glimpses through the trees of rocky cliffs and jagged crags, a sign that there were steeper climbs to come.

After Matthews' two-minute set-up demonstration, we grab our gear, and soon a little colony of green tents containing cots has popped up along the creek, fairly close to the campfire area. This is grizzly bear country, after all.

Guided by Dewy Matthews (ABOVE LEFT), Anchor D's owner, riders on the week-long journey saw everything from serene mountain lakes to bison skulls (LEFT), and left the task of transporting gear and food to three chuckwagons (OPPOSITE).

We make our way toward the fire, beside which the kitchen tent has been pitched and where a large pot of chili bubbles away on a small wood stove. Kelly Vinnicombe, a resourceful 23-year-old and our cook for the week, triggers the rush for plates when she emerges from the kitchen tent holding two steaming pans of cornbread. As will be the case for every meal during our journey, the food is as plentiful as it is tasty. No one goes hungry during an Anchor D ride.

Later, as the circle around the fire tightens, Matthews takes out his accordion and starts to sway gently, his fingers dancing over the keys. The evening morphs into an impromptu singalong and cowboy poetry recital, the notes and words of which will echo in our heads when we drift to sleep.

**AT BREAKFAST** the next morning, Matthews tells us that today will most likely be the longest, and perhaps the most demanding, ride of the entire week: up the 2,800-metre Mount Armstrong and across the Continental Divide into British Columbia before looping back to our camp at Baril Creek by late afternoon.

As I walk toward the horses, I notice that Earl hasn't been saddled. "You'll be going on Snort today — Earl has a small sore on his back and we're going to let it heal before we ride him again," Matthews says, putting a hand on my shoulder. "Snort is one of my favourite horses — take good care of him."



THIS SPREAD: IMAGES AT LEFT: ANDRÉ PŘEFONTAINE/CG STAFF; RIGHT: COURTESY /ANET AND MIKE MICHAUD; MAP: CHRIS BRACKLEY/CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC

We head out not long after breakfast and start a winding climb. As we cross the treeline and reach a large stony plateau, Matthews signals a stop, jumps off his horse and bends to pick up what looks like a rock. "What do you think this is?" He doesn't wait for an answer and tells us he's holding a piece of horn coral, a now extinct order of coral named for its distinctive shape. When you're high in the Rockies, it can be hard to imagine that some 90 million to 65 million years ago, during the mid-to-late Cretaceous period, a large inland sea that split the continent in two covered most of Western Canada. Everyone has an

I-knew-that look as the coral passes from hand to hand.

After this unexpected lesson in geochronology, we resume our ascent and reach Fording River Pass, at nearly 2,400 metres. We're atop the Continental Divide, but still in Alberta. "Look down there in the valley," says Matthews. "That's British Columbia." As if on cue, we all line up to have our picture taken with the province in the background.

Whatever goes up must come down, and I find myself whispering a short prayer as I contemplate how steep the descent looks and how so very narrow the trail seems to be. "Loose reins, lean back and let the horses do the work," Matthews yells

out before he drops out of sight down the trail and into British Columbia.

**AFTER A NIGHT** of marvelling at the agility of our mountain horses and telling a few tall tales, we break camp back in Alberta on the morning of our third day and load up the wagons. Over the next few hours, we make our way to the 1,903-metre summit of one of the Strawberry Hills, where we stop for lunch in a small meadow. We're rewarded by the view that unfolds as we dismount, and sore burns are quickly forgotten as we gaze at the panorama of surrounding peaks. Far below, a helicopter flies through the valley, reminding us how high we've climbed.



An hour later, we're back on our horses and heading down to our second campsite, at Carnarvon Creek, a ride that brings its fair share of "loose reins, work with your horse" moments along the way. Once camp is set up, a few of us walk along the creek and find a pool of water deep enough to sit in. The water is expectedly glacial, but works wonders on the aches and pains that come with a full day of riding. That said, we've all adapted fairly quickly to our days in the saddle. Perhaps it's the regular breaks and lunch-time rests that make the ride much more manageable, but I'd argue that it's the magical effect of being surrounded by the Rockies' peaks that does the trick. Matthews sums it up much more simply: "Horses are the best way to see this country."

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*André Préfontaine is the chief development officer of The Royal Canadian Geographical Society and the former publisher of Canadian Geographic and Canadian Geographic Travel.*

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**THE NEXT MORNING** finds us riding toward Mount Strachan, where we leave the horses behind for a gentle hike up to Carnarvon Lake. It's clear from Matthews' explanation of how the lake's emerald waters mirror the surrounding peaks and provide an unrivalled view into the valley below that this is a place he cherishes. At a distance, we can see the trail that snakes up the mountain, but as we get closer it becomes evident that the previous spring's floods have

## A LITTLE COLONY OF GREEN TENTS

pops up along the creek, fairly close to the campfire area. This is grizzly bear country, after all.

carved what look like giant claw marks in the mountainside. Some of these wash-outs are two or three metres deep and several metres wide, and several members of our group decide not to try to cross them. Those of us who do climb to the lake will later tell our companions of its azure water and the unbelievable view, marred only a little by further signs of flood damage.

We move the following day to our final camp along McPhail Creek, which we reach after another wondrous day on the

Riders descend a precipitous trail ('Loose reins, lean back and let the horses do the work,' instructs guide Dewy Matthews) on their way into British Columbia after crossing the Continental Divide.

trail. We're not long into the ride when Matthews spots a small group of elk grazing in the distance and we briefly stop to watch them. Toward the end of the lunch break, he sees something even more compelling. "There," he says, staring intensely

at the ridge opposite before pulling out his binoculars and focusing on what, to my naked eye, appears to be a big rock. "A

mother grizzly and her cub." We take turns gazing through the binoculars at the two bears, which are foraging as they move lazily along. A few moments later, Matthews spots another bear, this one much larger and hurrying along, as if to catch up with the female and her cub, and the binoculars are passed around again.

Our bear watching over, we saddle up and ride into camp, where the chuck-wagons await us, this time in the shadow of Mount McPhail. Around the campfire that night the talk is all about grizzly

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The riders pause to take pictures while on their way up to the Fording River Pass and the Continental Divide (LEFT). A lunch break with a view, from atop the summit of one of the Strawberry Hills (BELOW).

bones found nearby were shown to be about 500 years old. As the rain intensifies, a curtain of mist slowly rises from the valley floor, gradually masking the falls, making them seem as if they'd simply been an early-morning mirage. When they're completely obscured, and with the rain hammering down, everybody agrees to give the falls a miss and head back to camp.

For the first time since the beginning of the ride, the conversation around the campfire that evening seems subdued; we've all realized that this will be our last night on the trail, and that we don't want

it to end — not just yet anyway. Perhaps that's because of our sense of accomplishment — we've covered more than 100 kilometres in seven days over

some tough but marvellous terrain — or because we rode to and stood atop the Continental Divide. Then I realize that it's also because of the camaraderie that developed on the ride and the simplicity of life on the trail.



To see more images of the Great Divide Ride, visit [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ride](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ride).

bears, not only those we saw earlier but also the one that left large tracks in the mud a few hundred metres from our camp, along McPhail Creek. Despite our repeated questions, Matthews doesn't really have any horrific bear stories with which to regale us, although he notes that they're seen regularly, albeit usually at a comfortable distance. "We've never lost a guest yet," he says.

**IT'S RAINING** the next morning, which convinces Matthews that the waterfalls at Weary Creek Gap will be an especially wonderful sight. As we ride toward the tumbling ribbon of water in the distance, we come to a bend where

the previous spring's floods have severely eroded the banks of McPhail Creek, exposing old bones that seem to reach out to us from the ground.

**WE MAKE OUR WAY TO THE SUMMIT**  
of one of the Strawberry Hills, where we stop for lunch. Sore bums are quickly forgotten as we gaze at the panorama of surrounding peaks.

Dismounting for a closer look, we discover a long-buried bed of buffalo bones. Two partially uncovered skulls suggest that at least two of the animals died here, but how long ago is anyone's guess. Matthews explains that wild buffalo disappeared from the area in the mid-1800s and that at the very least these bones date to that era. Other

COURTESY JANET AND MIKE MICHAUD



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They paddled,  
they marched,  
they conquered





Experience adventure in  
La Mauricie National Park  
and history in Quebec City  
with the 2015 winners of  
Canada's Coolest School Trip

BY THOMAS HALL  
WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY JESSICA FINN

**T**'S COLD!" shrieks a group of Grade 8 students from Caledonia Regional High School in Hillsborough, N.B., as they jump into Wapizagonke Lake, which snakes through Quebec's La Mauricie National Park like a river. It's early June, and only a short time since their class arrived in Montreal and took the two-hour bus ride to the park to kick off Canada's Coolest School Trip. After the braver members of the group dry off, the entire class hits the water for a sunset paddle in rabaska canoes (large vessels that can seat 15). From the water, they can see the faint remains of 2,000-year-old First Nations pictographs on a secluded rock face on the edge of the lake.

"The red ink means it's sacred," a Parks Canada staffer explains to the students, who are gazing at the pictographs. "It was an important site. You can still even make out the shape of a turtle."

## Rain and chilly temperatures on the second day of the trip do little to dampen the spirits of the class.

The class won the opportunity to see such historic sights in La Mauricie National Park and Quebec City when they came first in the annual Canada's Coolest School Trip contest, by producing the best video about a national park (Fundy National Park, in their case) among all Grade 8 class entries in the nation. (The contest is a partnership between Parks Canada, The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, Historica Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Federation and Nature Canada, and is sponsored by Air Canada.)

Rain and chilly temperatures on the second day of the trip do little to dampen the spirits of the class. They paddle and hike to one of the park's wonders, Waber Falls, and spot a moose along the way. Though warmed by the day's activities, they are

ready for a hot shower and to move from tents into Parks Canada's oTENTiks (a tent-cabin hybrid) for a good night's rest. Tomorrow they will become 18th-century soldiers.

**"OUI MON CAPITAINE,"** echoes across the parade ground of Lévis Fort No. 1. The sole survivor of the three Lévis forts on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, it was built after the American Civil War to protect Quebec City from an attack by the United States. The attack never came and the fort was rendered obsolete in 1871, a year before it was finished. Now it's a national historic site that offers tours that give a glimpse of what it would have been like to be a soldier at the time.

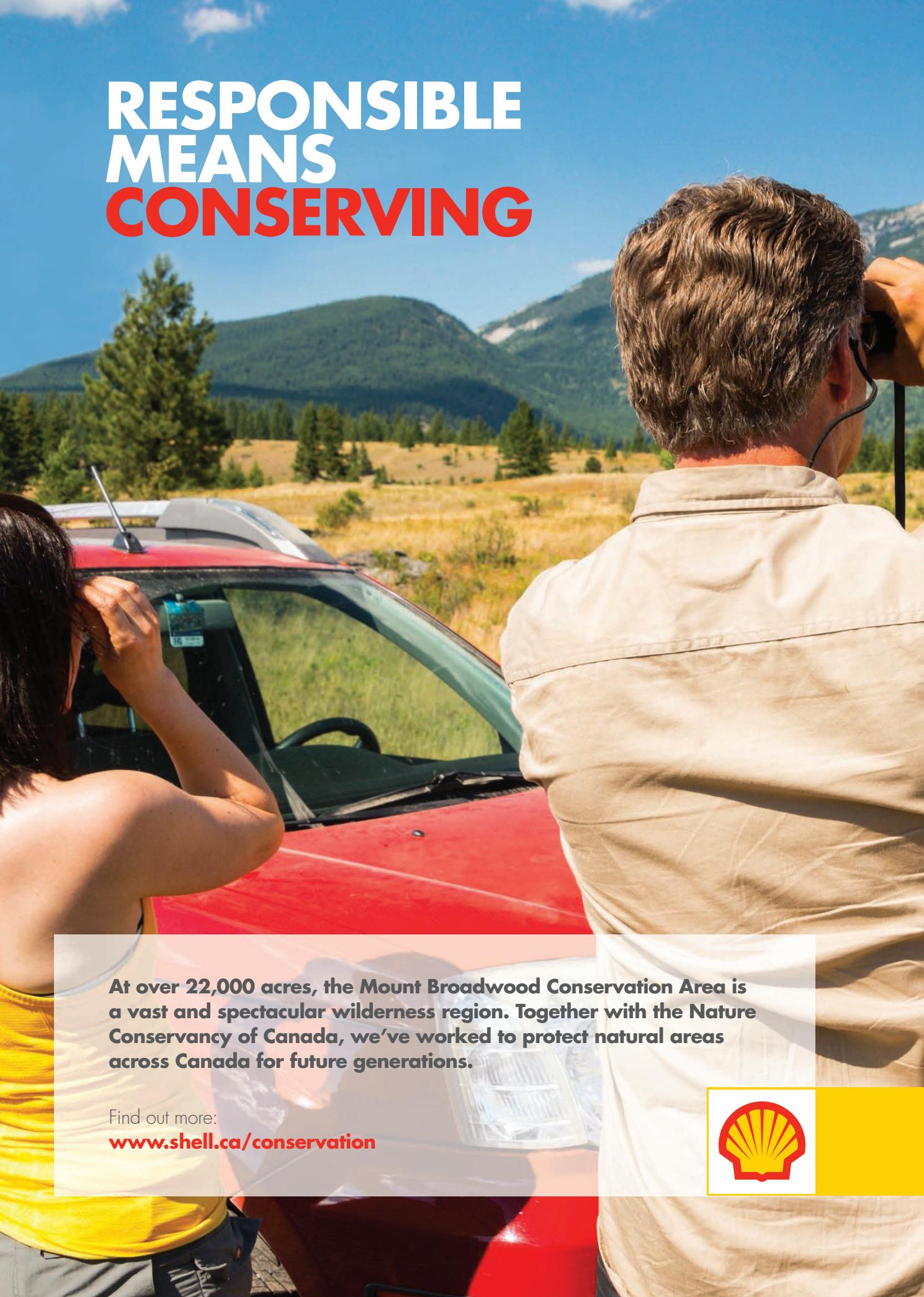
The class, adorned in tricorn hats and divided into regiments, march back and forth across the parade ground singing old war songs, feet stomping to the beat. Soon they would bed down in the old fort, but first they learn about its defences, how to operate a cannon and, like any good soldier of the era, how to dance to traditional French music.



A cold, rainy day in La Mauricie National Park doesn't stop the students from canoeing on Lake Wapizagonke (BELOW), which they had traversed the day before in rabaska canoes (PREVIOUS PAGES).



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Students watch a reenactment at Lévis Fort #1 (RIGHT) before donning uniforms and exploring the 19th-century stronghold with a costumed Parks Canada staffer (OPPOSITE TOP). Lt.-Col. Richard Garon speaks to the students before dinner at the Québec Garrison Club in Quebec City (OPPOSITE BOTTOM).

The next morning, a quick ferry ride across the St. Lawrence takes the class to Quebec City for the last day of the trip. Greeted at the top of the city's funicular by an actor portraying the first governor of Quebec, Charles de Montmagny, the class tours the newly excavated Saint-Louis Forts and Châteaux National Historic Site.

About 500,000 artifacts have been recovered from the site since 2005. The students find one of the more interesting items to be a hot-chocolate mug. Apparently

*Thomas Hall is an Ottawa-based freelance writer. Jessica Finn is the photo editor of Canadian Geographic Travel.*



17th-century French nobility enjoyed hot chocolate as much as the 2015 Grade 8 class from Hillsborough.

After exploring the city, the students learn how to load a musket and dress like a soldier. "It's hot," says Isaiah Downey, who has to endure a tooth, tongue and finger inspection, just like a recruit would have 400 years earlier, before being chosen to don the multi-layered uniform. "Also, it's heavy and has way too many buttons."

Dinner at the exclusive Québec Garrison Club caps off the trip. Military officers founded the club in 1879, and it is the only military club left in Canada practising the British tradition of allowing civilian elites to join. Some of its more illustrious guests have included Winston Churchill and Charles Lindbergh.

As dinner ends, the host, Lt.-Col. Richard Garon, asks the class about what it means to be a soldier. Eventually

## TRAIL TO VICTORY

**T**HE QUEST to go on Canada's Coolest School Trip, a partnership between Parks Canada, The Royal Canadian Geographical Society, Historica Canada, the Canadian Wildlife Federation and Nature Canada, begins each fall. The challenge seems simple: write, sing and film a one-minute song about a national park near your hometown. The students, however, have to do most of the work, and it's open to any Grade 8 class across the country. In short, it's time-consuming, fiercely competitive and a lot of fun.

"I asked them in September if they wanted to do it," says Melanie Doucet, teacher of this year's winning class (RIGHT, at La Mauricie National Park), which is from Caledonia Regional High School in Hillsborough, N.B. "They said, 'Yes!' We started the research and planning in October and then did most of the work in November and December."

Their winning video featured Fundy National Park. "I knew they would do a good job with it. It's part of their culture and history," says Doucet. The class found out they won when The Royal Canadian Geographical Society staged a school assembly, supposedly related to the 2014 Victoria Strait Expedition to search for the lost Franklin ships. Only the school's principal, Donna Godfrey, knew the truth. "I was sworn to secrecy," she says. "We had

everyone come to the gymnasium for this presentation on Franklin. When they found out they had won, they went wild."

Doucet says her class was in tears. "They were in shock; I was in shock. But it was still so exciting."





they settle on courage, determination and intelligence.

"That's right," says Garon. "And you know what? You showed these qualities when you won Canada's Coolest School Trip. I'll bet people told you that coming from a small town you couldn't win. So you had to be courageous to even try to win. Then you had to be determined because it's a hard competition. Finally you had to be intelligent enough to write

the best song and get people to vote. But you know what the real secret to being a good soldier is? No soldier can win on their own. Teamwork is the most important quality of a soldier, and you all showed that when you won the contest."



See more pictures of Canada's Coolest School Trip and read daily blogs about the journey at [mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ccst](http://mag.cangeo.ca/sep15/ccst).

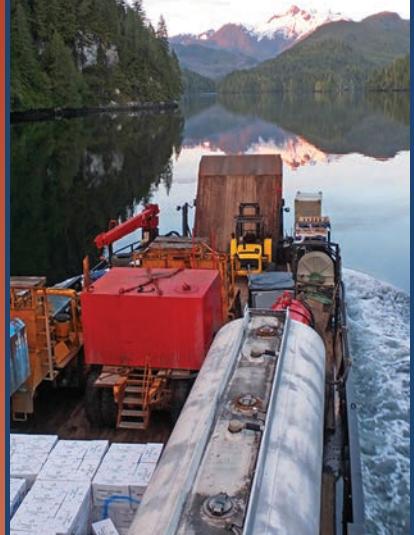


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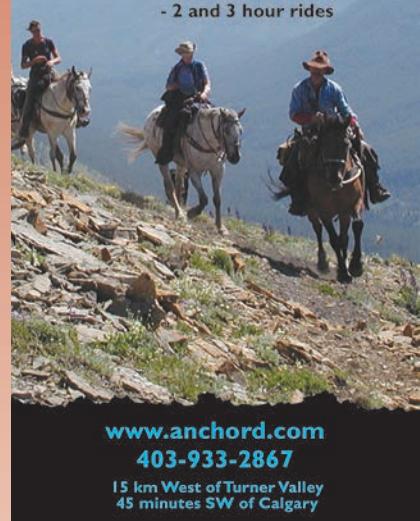
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You'll be itching to clink steins after reading **Leah Gerber** and **Michela Rosano's** rundown of Canada's best Oktoberfests



**DUST OFF YOUR LEDERHOSEN** or dirndl — it's Oktoberfest time. The celebration of Bavarian culture has become a global celebration, and (Germany aside) Canada does it as well as anyone. So no matter where you find yourself in the country this fall, get ready to bellow "Eins, zwei, g'suffa!" (One, two, drink!)

**Tatamagouche, N.S.** This small village on the Northumberland Strait plays host to the largest Oktoberfest in Canada east of Kitchener-Waterloo (see below). The event is in its 36th year and regularly sees more than 3,000 people flood Tatamagouche to chow down on everything from local fish to schnitzel and listen to bands such as the Golden Keys. Sept. 25-26, nsoktoberfest.ca

**Halifax** Garrison Brewery co-hosts the city's family-oriented Oktoberfest at the famed Seaport Farmers' Market, so there's plenty of cold craft beer and fun activities such as face painting for the kids, not to mention music from the likes of the Roving Steins, and plenty of authentic German food, including the ubiquitous bratwurst, of course. Late September, hfxoktoberfest.ca

**Bertrand, N.B.** Born in 2010 from an idea to celebrate local beer and the opening of the town's Beer Museum, the four-day Oktoberfest des Acadiens in this village at the mouth of the Caraquet River features a slew of local and imported brews — perfect for washing down a platter or two of the region's famous Caraquet oysters. Sept. 3-6, oktoberfestdesacadiens.com

**Repentigny, Que.** A superb showcase of Quebec microbrews, the Oktoberfest de Repentigny takes place over three days along the shore of the St. Lawrence River

at Parc de l'Île-Lebel in this suburb northeast of Montreal. What else can you expect? Carnival rides for kids and adults, street performers and, perhaps most important, German music, a traditional *biergarten* and beer-tasting workshops. Sept. 11-13. oktoberfestdesquebecois.com

**Vankleek Hill, Ont.** Could this be the best little Oktoberfest in Canada? Many would argue that in its seven years, the two-day gathering in Vankleek Hill, a small rural town halfway between Ottawa and Montreal, has become exactly that. Hosted by hometown success story Beau's All Natural Brewing Company, the event features traditional Bavarian and rock music (last year's acts included Joel Plaskett Emergency), 25 restaurant booths (the menus of which must reflect the fest's Bavarian theme), hundreds of beers from a huge variety of brewers and feats of strength such as a spouse-carrying race. Oct. 2-3, beausoktoberfest.ca

**Toronto** You'll forget that you're partying in the Ontario Place east parking lot not long after walking into the 2,787-square-metre tent that's home to the Toronto Oktoberfest, a two-day affair that features a Bavarian-style village, carnival rides, no shortage of schnitzel, sausage, sauerkraut and spaetzle (small egg noodles), and traditional dancing and games. Sept. 18-19, torontooktoberfest.ca

**Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont.** This is the big one. The nine-day bash in K-W (pictured ABOVE), the largest Oktoberfest in the world outside Munich, is estimated to draw as many as 1.1 million people. Traditionalists should head to any of the local German clubs for *festhalle*-style tables, beer-swilling

and oompah bands, while hungry visitors looking for something different can attend the OktoberFEAST food truck event from Oct. 10 to 11. Oct. 9-17, oktoberfest.ca

**Regina** When it comes to Oktoberfest, the Regina German Club takes things pretty seriously, importing seasonal brews from Germany for its celebration of all things Bavarian. The family-friendly atmosphere on Saturday afternoon transitions to the evening's festivities, which for the past two years have included a miniature horse named Harry leading a procession into the club to tap the ceremonial Oktoberfest keg. Visitors can also expect traditional games, polka and waltz music, and the chance to win a wheelbarrow full of that imported beer. Oct. 2-3, reginagermanclub.ca

**Penticton, B.C.** Penticton's Oktoberfest pulls in visitors from across British Columbia and nearby Washington state. On offer are imported beers from Bavaria and Austria, locally produced beers from Cannery Brewing, local wine chosen from a different vineyard each year (this is the Okanagan, after all), plus musical acts such as oompah band The Beerbarrels. Oct. 24, pentictionoktoberfest.ca

**Vancouver** The Vancouver Alpen Club hosts this hugely popular event (get your tickets early), which includes an Oktoberfest Olympics — think stein-holding contests and yodelling competitions — polka music and, of course, plenty of local and imported German beer. Sept. 26, Oct. 3 and Oct. 16-17, vancouveralpenclub.ca



Did we miss your favourite Oktoberfest? Let us know on Twitter (@CanGeo) or Facebook (facebook.com/cangeo).



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